

79 01264



INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT
STUDIES

APR 11 1979

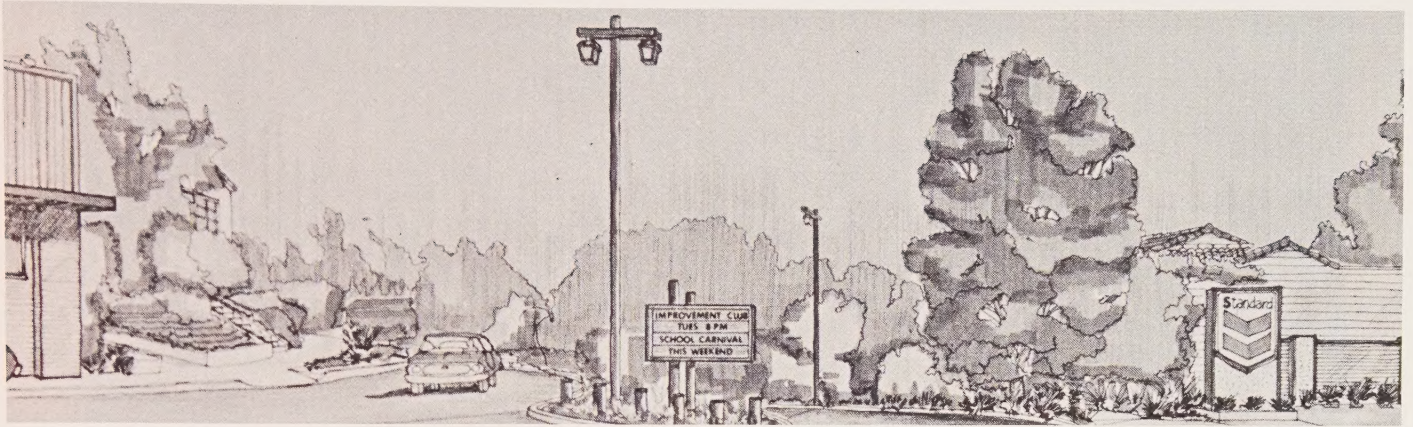
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

A SURVEY BY THE
KENSINGTON IMPROVEMENT CLUB
KENSINGTON, CALIFORNIA

1978

N 80

A SURVEY OF KENSINGTON



Arlington Avenue looking south — *Bart Jones, Architect*

Kensington, CA -- Politics and
government
" -- social conditions

**COMPILED BY THE
KENSINGTON IMPROVEMENT CLUB
KENSINGTON, CALIFORNIA**

1978



Kensington Community Council Open House

Printed by



Creative Arts Printing
Berkeley, California
1978

A SURVEY OF KENSINGTON

Table of Contents

Purpose of The Survey	3
Kensington's History	5
Kensington's Government	13
Kensington's Physical Setting	25
Kensington's Streets and Traffic	29
Kensington's Housing	33
Kensington's Residents	37
Kensington's Amenities	43
Kensington's Distinctive Quality	51
Summary	54

Maps and Charts

Map 1 - Subdivisions	6
Chart 1 - Governmental Structure	17
Chart 2 - Recreation Funding	21
Map 2 - Land Use and Character	28
Map 3 - Streets and Traffic	32
Map 4 - Kensington Park Master Plan	47

EDITORIAL STAFF

Natalie Salsig
Joseph B. Barnwell

Marion Martin
Cecile McCann

SURVEY COMMITTEE

Ray Jewell
Muriel Scolnik
Dr. Robert Birtcil
Lawrence Thorpe
V.S. (Stan) Roth

Nikki Bailey
Gwen Stone
Iva Jones
Rosemary Barnwell
Joseph B. Barnwell

Louis Stein
Ormsby Donogh
John Hoagland
Natalie Salsig

DRAWINGS BY PAMELA DRAKE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

Joseph B. Barnwell
Marvin Martin
Arnold Chapman
Richard Edwards

KENSINGTON IMPROVEMENT CLUB

Board of Directors 1977-1978

President - V.S. (Stan) Roth

Iva Jones
Glenn Morrison
Natalie Salsig
Ray Jewell
Dr. Robert Birtcil

Joseph B. Barnwell
Bob Hansen
Bart Jones
Cecile McCann
Pat Sherman

Nikki Bailey
John Hoagland
Lawrence Thorpe
John Sage

Copies of this book are available at Roth Realty, 264 Arlington Avenue
Kensington, California 94707

Price \$2.50

- 1978 -

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

In 1966 the Kensington Improvement Club published the first "Survey of Kensington." Residents, newcomers, youth groups and researchers have found it most useful over the past twelve years. Now it is time to bring it up to date. Our original purpose remains the same—to present some facts (and a few opinions) about Kensington which will help us all toward a better understanding of our community. To the newcomer this Survey will be a convenient orientation; to our old-timers it will serve as a refresher.

We hope this new survey will serve also as a reference source in reaching decisions about the community. Kensington is certain to feel the impact of changes that take place throughout the San Francisco Bay area. If the facts presented here add to the knowledge of each resident so that wiser decisions can be made, the Survey will be worth many times over the effort which produced it.

The 1961 Annual Report of the Kensington Fire District described our community as: "Nine hundred acres of tranquility and aloofness, sometimes called the 'Shangri-La of the East Bay Hills'." This is but one image of Kensington. There are many others, and probably no two people would agree on the one best description. There is an image of well built homes clambering up the hillside and peeping over into Wildcat Canyon. There is an image of spectacular views of the bays and the cities for some and secluded wooded areas for others. There is an image of narrow crooked streets serving as traffic conductors and parking stalls for vehicles or as playgrounds for children and dogs. There is an image of older homes on spacious grounds. There is an image of convenience to the entire Bay Region. There is an image of friendly, well-informed neighbors. And finally, there is the intangible image of "volunteerism"—the enthusiastic spirit characteristic of residents who generously contribute time and effort toward providing Kensington with the amenities they want for themselves and their children.

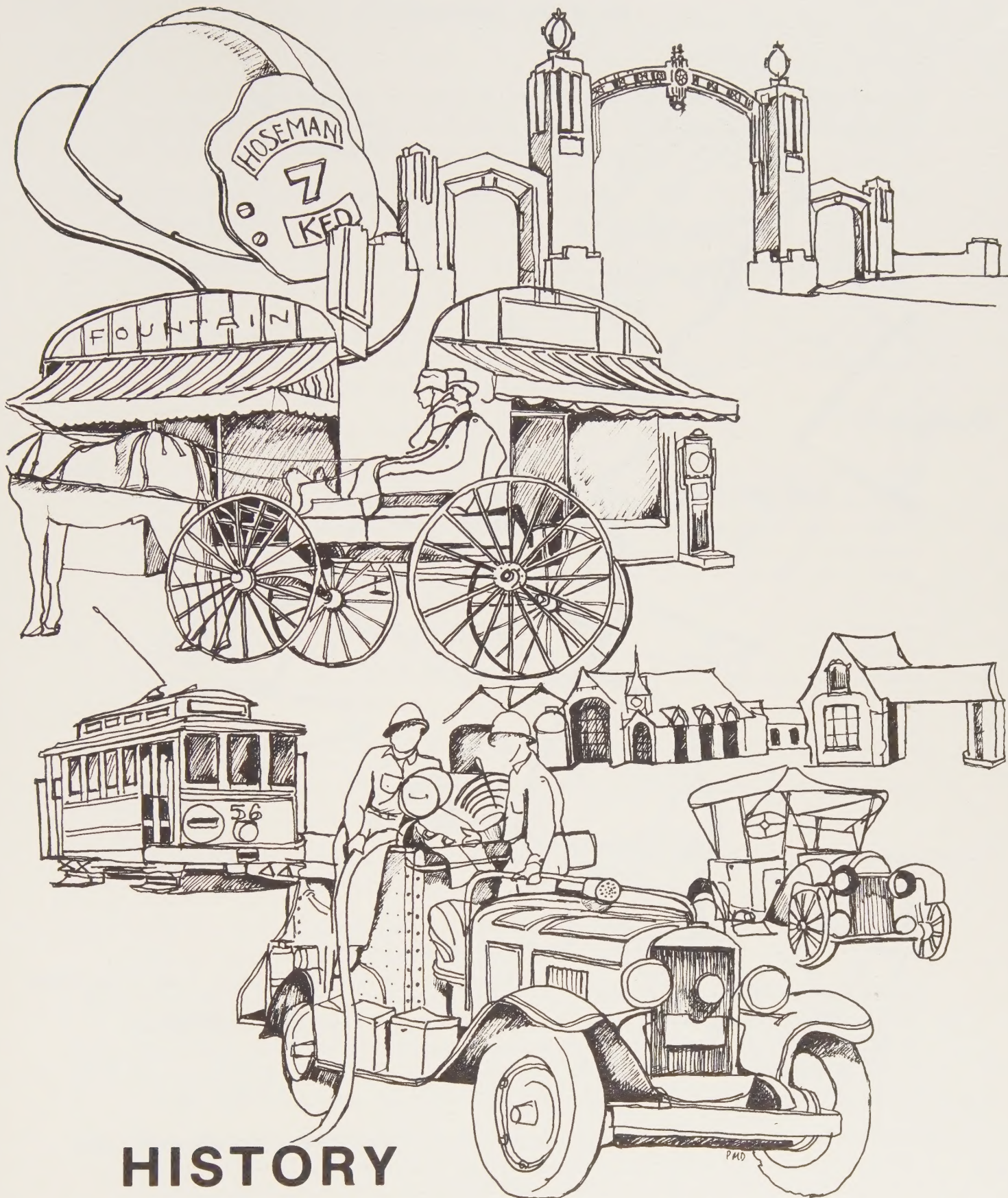
Now let us take a deeper look at these images. Our attractive homes and yards are the result of community pride and desire to create beauty for ourselves and our neighbors. Community pride does not occur spontaneously. It must be nurtured carefully lest it either wither away or grow into a corrupting exclusiveness. Our spectacular views are continually debased by outside influences such as bay filling and air pollution. Within our boundaries we permit our views to be obscured by ugly power poles, tall redwoods, eucalyptus, acacia and Monterey pine.

Our streets are cluttered with the second or third automobile that 1978 affluence has imposed on a 1920 street pattern. If we feel secure, tranquil and aloof from major traffic problems, remember that we live squarely across an important north-south vehicle flow which can only increase as population density rises to the north. What is the rapid transit station in El Cerrito doing to our east-west traffic conductors? If our children play happily in the streets is it, in part, due to the lack of adequate play areas?

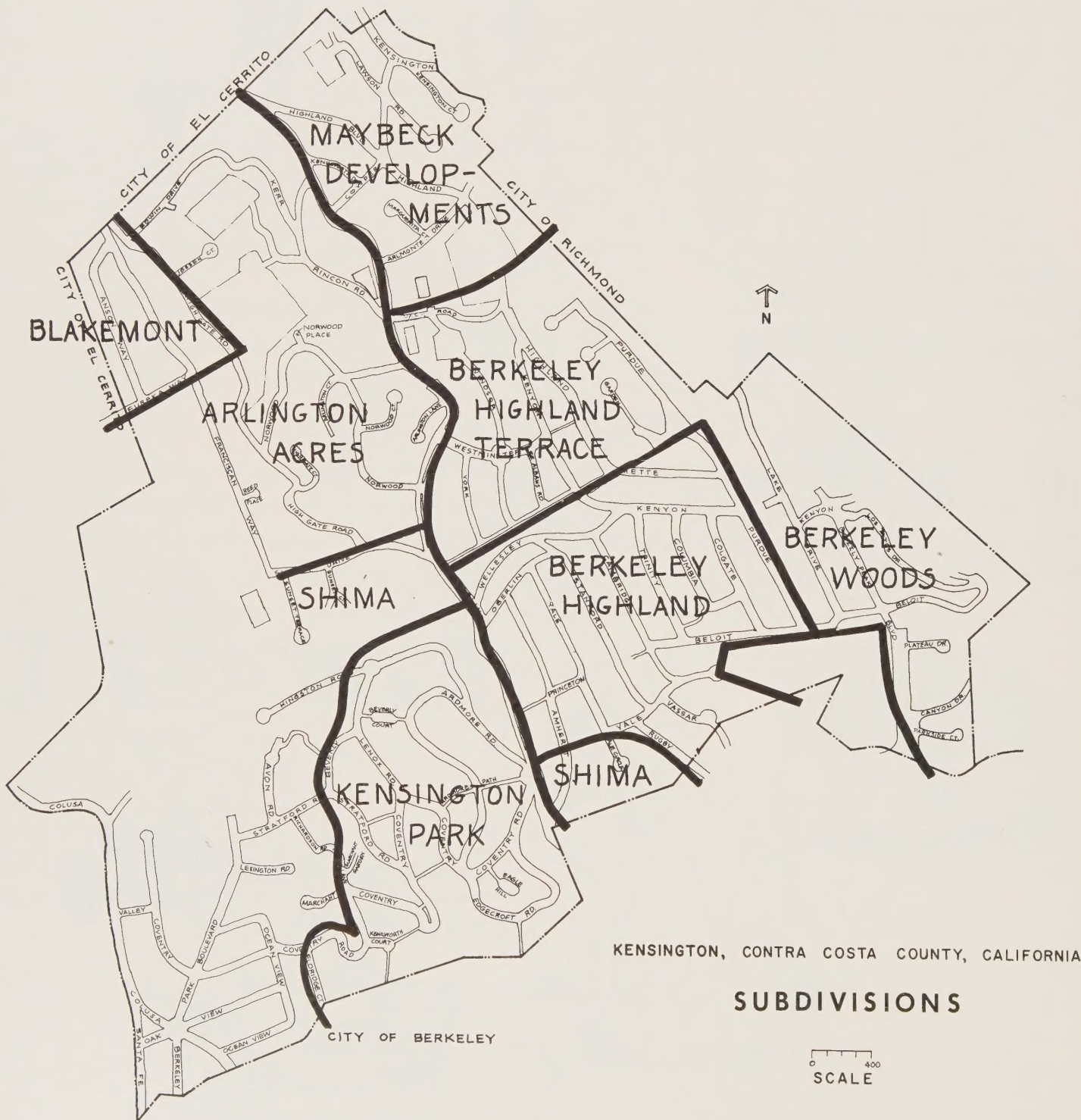
The old homes on large lots are an attractive asset as long as land speculation does not force them out. When houses are worth only a small fraction of the land value, there is always a danger that they might be replaced by apartments. This is the usual pattern of change in a mature single-family area.

Our convenience to everything in the East Bay is also the source of a threat to our present way of life. This convenience is one reason why our land values . . . and taxes . . . are soaring. What effect will this have on our retired residents who must pay rising taxes from a fixed income?

Living in an unincorporated area without an elected home government to assume responsibility for local improvements, Kensington citizen groups have promoted local projects for community betterment. They have shown courage, inspiration and dedication in providing educational and recreational programs and facilities to meet community needs. Will Kensington continue to exhibit this spirit of creativeness? Will we continue to share a vision of a better community for all, and will volunteer effort be forthcoming to provide the needed amenities?



HISTORY



KENSINGTON IMPROVEMENT CLUB

MAP 1

KENSINGTON'S HISTORY

- 1772 The Pedro Fages Expedition passed through the Kensington area on their journey from what is now El Cerrito to Wildcat Canyon. The area had been inhabited by the Juchiyunes, Acalanes, Bolgonéz, and Carquinez tribes.
- 1823 Land was granted by Spain to Francisco Maria Castro. The grant was in the Diocese of Mission Dolores. Trees and grapevines of the Mission were set out.
- 1825 The Castro family built first home in Alvarado Creek area; the home was destroyed by fire. A second structure was built in 1829 in the same area.
- 1831 Francisco Maria Castro died leaving one-half of his estate to his widow, Dona Gabriella Barrey essa De Castro. One twenty-second of this estate went to each of Castro's eleven children. The Kensington area went to Victor, the youngest son.
- 1834 The grant to the Castro family was confirmed.
- 1838 Jesus Maria, another of Francisco Castro's sons, built a new home for his mother in San Pablo. A daughter, Martina, married Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado in 1839. Gabriella came into land held by her children at their deaths. She, in turn, gave all her holdings to Martina and her husband, Alvarado. The Alvarados' right to all of this land brought legal action from the other Castros. Litigation lasted for forty years. Victor Castro married Louisa Martinez. They built a home in El Cerrito where the Plaza now stands. Victor and his brother, Juan Jose, received the El Sobrante land grant or surplus land between Pinole Grant and San Pablo Grant, including Mare Island. Victor ferried trappers, miners, etc. across the bay from Point Isabel to San Francisco. He also sold supplies.
- 1848 California ceded to the United States. State Constitution approved in 1849.
- 1850 Contra Costa County formed by an act of the State Legislature as one of the original twenty-seven counties. Confirmed in 1851.
- 1853 Alameda County formed by Act of Legislature, [El] Cerrito Creek formed the southern boundary between the two counties.
- 1859 Indians in this area had completely disappeared. Cholera epidemics, wars between tribes and contagion of new diseases killed them.
- 1892 Anson Blake bought part of Rancho San Pablo. The Blakes lived on land now occupied by University of California Memorial Stadium. Anson Blake transplanted eucalyptus trees from family homesite to Kensington property when family moved in 1922. Anson Blake and realtor George Schmidt founded Schmidt Village in Rust in 1896. Rust is now El Cerrito. Schmidt Village was located at Blake Street and Schmidt Lane.
- 1896 Court decision in holdings of original Castro land grant. Some of the land had been sold without clearing title. Squatters had claimed land wherever they staked out. The Castros had lived in a state of landed poverty and their vast holdings had dwindled.

Kensington lay within these areas: Lot = 1 - George Leviston, Lot = 2 - Philip Galpin, Lots = 3 and 3½ - Richard O'Neil (trustee for the Castros).

- 1900 On May 5th, Victor Castro died and his property went to many heirs.
- 1906 The San Francisco earthquake and fire brought many people into the East Bay Area.
- 1910 The gate at Arlington and Amherst Avenues was built (see photo, p. 9). It was taken down in 1930.
- 1911 Kensington Park subdivision started by Dodge and Ver Mehr of the North End Land Company. Berkeley Park subdivision started by Brock of Berkeley Park Company.
- 1913 Stege Sanitary District formed; this was the first unification in the area. Berkeley Highlands developed by Meikle, Brock and Skidmore of Berkeley Investment Company. They built the street car tracks up the Arlington from Berkeley for \$33,000.
- 1914 Berkeley Highlands Terrace developed by F. R. Peake Company. Fellowship House built at 264 Arlington Avenue.
- 1917 El Cerrito was incorporated. The boundaries of this city were set for political considerations to exclude Kensington, leaving Kensington as an unincorporated area.
- 1919 Arlington Acres subdivision. George Baxter bought property on default mortgage. He was founder of Sunset View Cemetery.
- 1920 Population of Kensington was 226.
- 1921 First meeting of the Improvement Club was held at home of William Farley on Ardmore Road. Forty-eight registered voters from a six square mile area attended. First deputy sheriffs—Howard, Kleeburger and Woolsey—protected residents from hunters.
- 1922 Street lights installed as a result of efforts of Anson Blake and Lee Howard.
- 1923 People displaced from their dwellings by the fire in Berkeley became Kensington residents.
- 1925 Kensington School and Kensington PTA started. Five children registered for Kindergarten by 1930. Previously, children had attended Oxford, Garfield, Berkeley or University High Schools.
- 1927 First Boy Scout Troop was sponsored by the Improvement Club. Troop 14 had eight boys enrolled by 1931.
- 1928 Pharmacy Building on Arlington completed. The Neighborhood Center was built on present Standard Oil Company property. This comprised firehouse, grocery, real estate office. Architect was W. R. Yelland of Coventry Road. Grocery was operated by Hertnec and later enlarged to include a meat market and a barber shop. Volunteer fire department formed. Fred Wallis was the first chief. Albert Stein was the night man.



Arlington and Amherst Avenues in 1910



Arlington and Amherst Avenues in 1978

- 1930 Machell Police Patrol. Stores added north of pharmacy (Greenwoods, shoemaker and beauty shop).
- 1932 Arlington Church Community Center started at Fellowship House, the building that stands at 264 Arlington Avenue. John Griggs was the first director.
- 1934 John Griggs advertised in small neighborhood paper (the Argos) for interested women to meet at Fellowship House to form Arlington Women's Club.
- 1935 Fred Norton became the first paid policeman. He received \$1.00 to \$1.50 per month from each Kensington household. He furnished his own car, a model T Ford. Standard Oil Company bought Arlington Avenue property.
- 1940 Kensington Improvement Club formed officially. Kensington Nursery school started. Youngs Market and the Variety Store were added to Arlington Avenue shopping area. Population of the area was 2971.
- 1942 El Cerrito Jr./Sr. High School built.
- 1944 The Outlook was started as a volunteer service project. Reverend Herbert Dimock of the Arlington Community Church was the first editor.
- 1945 The land for the Arlington Community Church was purchased from Anson Blake.
- 1946 Formation of Police Protection District.
- 1948 Arlington Community Church was moved to new site at 52 Arlington Avenue. The Community Center Council was formed.
- 1949 First use of official police cars. Previously, police had used own cars.
- 1950 Arlington Community Church remodeled and enlarged. Chapel and Canteen sections built. Arlington Avenue widened and improved. Street car tracks removed from Arlington Avenue.
- 1951 New Kensington Elementary School built on site of old school. School population so large there were six kindergarten classes. Medical building, offices built at 267 Arlington Avenue.
- 1952 First volunteer-directed summer recreation program under supervision of Mrs. William Stiles.
- 1953 Police Protection District re-organized as Kensington Community Services District (KCSD).
- 1955 Youth Hut built largely with volunteer services. Responsibility for Parks and Recreation vested in the KCSD.
- 1956 Recreation Advisory Board established to advise and assist Service District Board of Directors. Annexation to city of El Cerrito voted down by a margin of almost two to one.

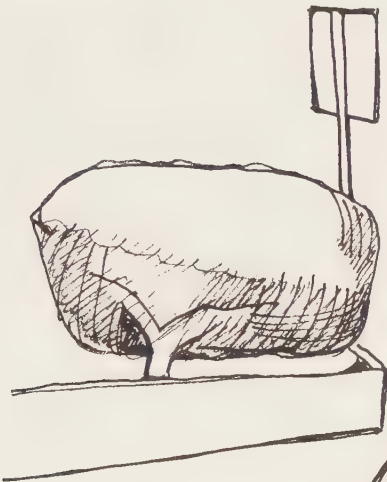


Volunteers assist in Youth Hut construction, 1955



Margaret Berry dedicates Youth Hut to youth activities

- 1957 Drop-in program for teenagers established. Effort to incorporate Kensington was unsuccessful.
- 1959 On December 17, Kensington became an official postal designation, and Arlington Pharmacy was made an official branch post office.
- 1960 Kensington Community Council (KCC) incorporated. The KCC assumed the publication of the Outlook. New sanctuary added to the Arlington Community Church.
- 1961 Unitarian Church construction completed.
- 1962 Cooperation between KCC and Community Service District established a new year-round recreation program with an office on the grounds of the lower school.
- 1963 Library service district established. Master plan for recreation area drawn up by KCC.
- 1965 New Library building was dedicated.
- 1966 Kensington residents turn down El Cerrito annexation again. Amphitheater added to Kensington Park.
- 1967 Bonds passed to furnish funds to bring Kensington school buildings up to earthquake standards.
- 1969 Fire and Police Building bonds voted. Ground broken for building.
- 1970 New Fire and Police Building opened. Mortgage on Library building burned; paid off only five years after building was finished.
- 1971 Tot lot in Kensington Park started.
- 1972 Kensington Property Owners Association formed. Tot lot opened. Kensington has its first restaurant. BART starts operations.
- 1973 Moeser Lane, in El Cerrito, becomes a four lane street from Arlington to San Pablo Avenue, giving Kensington residents a direct east-west access.
- 1975 Senior Activity Center started at Arlington Community Church. Kensington Park is identified with a sign.
- 1976 Utilities on the Arlington are placed underground. New electroliers are installed. Tennis courts are opened in Kensington Park.
- 1977 A sign to announce local events and identify the community is erected at Kensington's south entrance on Arlington Avenue. Intermediate age playground is built.
- 1978 Picnic area added to Kensington Park.



GOVERNMENT

KENSINGTON'S GOVERNMENT

Kensington is an unincorporated area of Contra Costa County; consequently, governmental services for Kensington residents are fragmented among Contra Costa County offices, agencies, and districts; independent districts; and regional districts. The main divisions of county government are outlined here, but not all county services are included.

Voter registration is taken in the Fire and Police Building, 215 Arlington Avenue, Kensington; phone 526-7300. Kensington residents vote for all elected Contra Costa County officers and for boards of independent districts. They may attend meetings of any elected body.

Taxes are levied both for county services and for independent districts. The county and independent districts each draw up their own budget; then, based on the Assessor's annual assessment roll figures, a tax is set which will meet the needs of each budget. County tax and taxes for independent districts appear on the county tax bill.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES (elected)

- A. Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors: 651 Pine Street, Martinez, California 94553; phone 372-4080. This board heads county government. The county is divided into five districts, each supervised by one of the five members on the board. Kensington is in District One, which also includes Richmond and El Cerrito, with offices at 100 37th Street, Richmond, 94805; phone 231-3231. Supervisors appoint a County Administrator and a County Counsel whose offices are in Martinez.
- B. Assessor: 256 24th Street, Richmond; phone 231-3121. Assessment Appeals Board: phone 372-2035.
- C. Auditor-Controller.
- D. Treasurer-tax collector: phone 372-2035.
- E. Clerk-Recorder: 100 37th Street, Richmond; phone 231-3225. Duties include: issuing marriage licenses, conducting elections, registering voters, recording vital statistics and real estate documents, and issuing dog licenses.

II. PUBLIC PROTECTION

A. Courts

- 1. Superior Court: Elected members: 12 judges who serve staggered six year terms. Appointed members: Family Law Commissioner, Juvenile Court Referee, Grand Jury, and Jury Commissioner.

2. Bay Municipal Court: 5 judges elected for six year terms. Sits at 100 37th Street, Richmond; phone 231-3121.
- B. District Attorney-Public Administrator: elected for four year term.
- C. Sheriff-Coroner: elected for four year term.
- D. Public Defender: appointed.
- E. County Probation Officer: appointed by the Superior Court Juvenile Judge. The Probation Department operates Juvenile Hall, Byron Boys' Ranch, Girls' Center, and the Preplacement Center.

III. PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

- A. Department of Agriculture: 100 37th Street, Richmond.
 1. Animal Control

Lost and found animals: West County Center, 790 San Pablo Avenue, Pinole, phone 235-7666; also, 4849 Imhoff Drive, Martinez, phone 798-1773. Spay and neuter clinic: phone 237-4484, Martinez.
 2. Agricultural law enforcement: plant inspection; rodent, pest and weed control.
 3. Division of Weights and Measures.
- B. Veterans' Service Officer

Assists veterans to obtain services due them under the law.
- C. Human Resources Agency
 1. Social Service

Provides for the needy and handicapped; gives foster care, child abuse protection, home-care for the house-bound; counseling and referrals; phone 231-3551. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) operates from 3431 Macdonald Avenue, Richmond; phone 231-3481.
 2. Medical services
 - a. Ambulance service (commercial): phone 234-3242. In emergency, Kensington Fire Department, phone 237-3231, will call ambulance and give first aid and resuscitation before the ambulance arrives.
 - b. Emergency Medical Service: in Richmond, phone 231-3061.
 - c. Mental Health Emergency: in Richmond, phone 231-3061.
 - d. County Hospital: out-patient clinic in Martinez.
 - e. Richmond Clinic: 38th and Bissell Avenue; open daily 8 a.m. - 9 p.m., except Sundays, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.; phone 231-3021. Facilities available: pharmacy, laboratory and x-ray. The clinic operates mental health, dental and methadone clinics and treats sick babies.
 - f. Visiting nurse service: phone 231-3186.

g. Alcohol treatment: 100 37th Street, Richmond; phone 231-3132.

h. Health Department

1111 Ward Street, Martinez; some services at 100 37th Street, Richmond. Gives immunizations, VD treatment, TB tests, x-ray, pap smears, breast examinations, crippled children's services, health screening for well babies and seniors; makes food and water supply inspections. See phone book, Contra Costa County, Health Services.

D. West Contra Costa County Hospital District (independent) Brookside Hospital, Vale Road, San Pablo; phone 235-7000. Administered by five directors elected for four year terms. Has 24 hour emergency service.

IV. PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

County Administration Building, 6th Floor, Pine and Escobar Streets, Martinez 94553. For information, phone 372-2102. Engineers and maintains roads and storm drains; maintains Arlington Avenue median strip. For road maintenance problems, phone 372-4477 during working hours. For emergencies relative to road maintenance, call the Public Works Corporation Yard, 845 Brookside Drive, Richmond; phone 232-3064. The Assistant Public Works Director, Road Design Division, is in charge of drainage improvement; phone 372-2131.

V. BUILDING INSPECTION

County Administration Building; phone 372-2300. Building permits, issued for plans which meet regulations, are required for all building, alterations to buildings, or additions, including electrical work. A contractor may secure the permit, but the home-owner is responsible for having a permit.

VI. PLANNING

County Administration Building; phone 372-2035.

A. Planning Department

Among other duties, this department prepares and administers zoning and tree planting ordinances and hears requests for variances of all planning ordinances.

B. County Planning Commission

VII. EDUCATION

A. County Superintendent of Schools, elected for a four year term.

B. County Board of Education has seven elected members, each representing an area of the county. Its function is to provide business, administrative and coordinating services to school districts; to administer special education programs and other education-related matters. Jefferson School, housed in bungalows at 1 Windsor

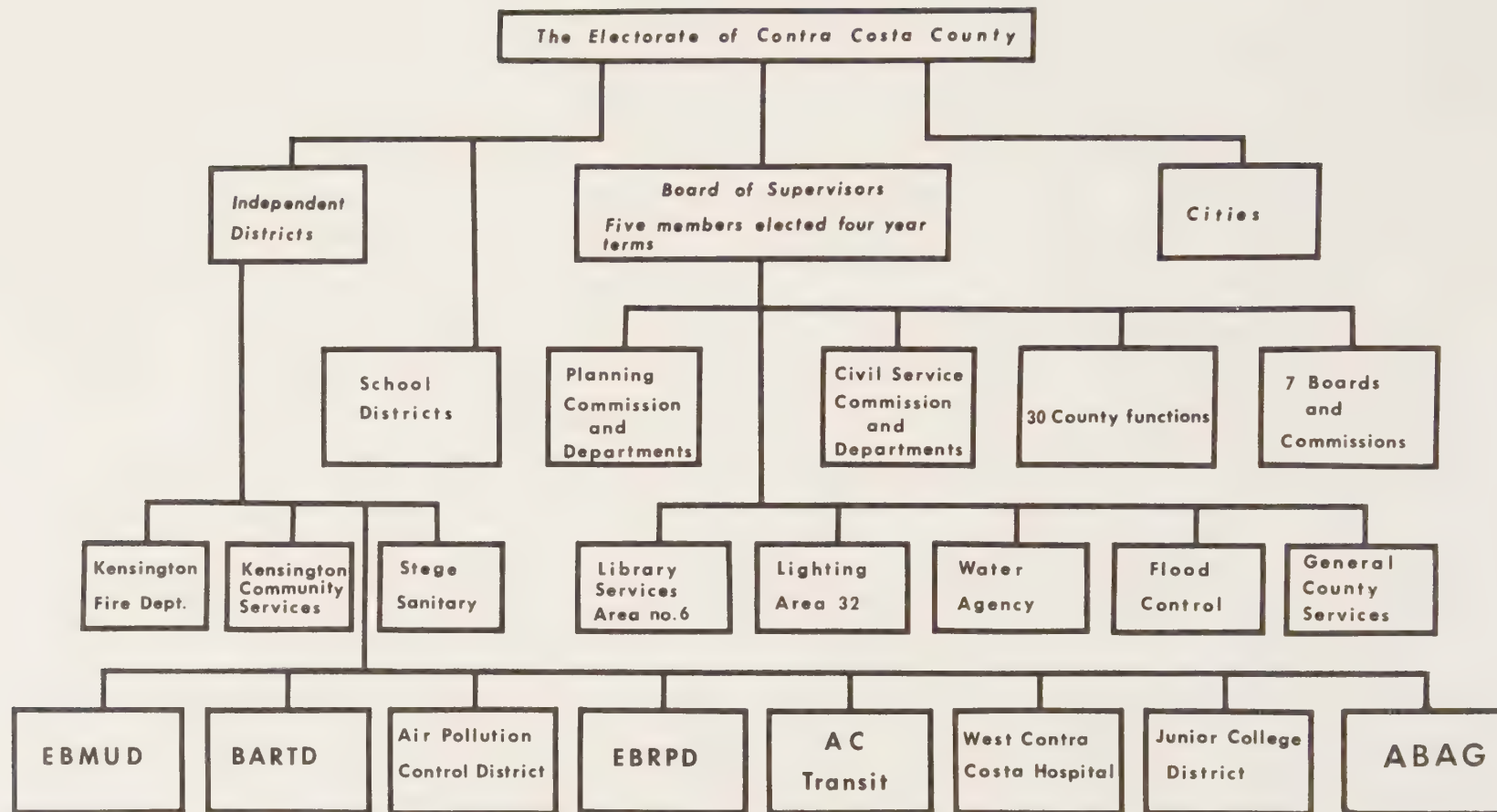


CHART 1

- Avenue, Kensington, is a county school for the trainable mentally retarded, with a 1977-78 enrollment of 67 pupils.
- C. Contra Costa Community College District (independent). Administration office: 500 Court, Martinez; phone 229-1000. Contra Costa Community College: 2600 Mission Bell Drive, San Pablo; phone 235-7800.
 - D. Richmond Unified School District
 - 1. Administrative Office: 1108 Bissell Avenue, Richmond; phone 234-3825. The district includes Kensington, El Cerrito, Richmond, El Sobrante, San Pablo, Pinole and Hercules. The governing board of five directors is elected. Directors serve staggered four year terms. Meetings are open to the public. For information on the location and time of meetings, call 234-3825.
 - 2. Kensington Elementary School, 90 Highland Boulevard, Kensington, had 425 children enrolled in grades kindergarten through six in 1977. Children who are bused to the school from other district areas comprise 28 per cent of the enrollment.
 - 3. At the 7th grade level, Kensington children may choose to attend Portola Junior High in El Cerrito or Adams Junior High in Richmond. When they reach high school level, they have the choice of El Cerrito High or Kennedy High School in Richmond.
 - 4. Property in Kensington originally owned by the Richmond Unified School District included 16.5 acres between Arlington Avenue and Wildcat Canyon, and Arlmonte Drive and the north ends of Windsor and Highland. Unused portions have been dedicated for community uses. One parcel was deeded to Kensington Community Service District and Arlington Community Church for a parking lot opposite the church at 52 Arlington Avenue. Another parcel from the parking lot to the top of the intermediate age play area, was deeded to Kensington Community Service District, forming the nucleus of Kensington Park. A third parcel was deeded to the County Library District for the Kensington Branch Library. The Community Service District leases for \$1 a year, one bungalow for the recreation office and indoor recreation and the sites of the tennis courts, picnic area and tot lot. Bungalows which once housed Kensington Elementary "Lower School" are leased to the County Board of Education for Jefferson School.
 - E. County Library Service
 - 1. The Contra Costa Library System serves all of Contra Costa County through its 16 branches, with the exception of the City of Richmond, which has its own city library.

2. Kensington Branch Library, 61 Arlington Avenue, was built with Kensington taxes by the formation of a Kensington Library Service District, which was dissolved upon the final payment of all costs of the building. Hours: Monday through Thursday, 12 noon to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Phone 524-3043.

VIII. STEGE SANITARY DISTRICT (independent)

Formed in 1913 under Health and Safety Code 6400, to serve Kensington, El Cerrito, and Richmond Annex south of Potrero Avenue, Stege's function is the collection of sewage, which is treated by East Bay Municipal Utility District; maintenance of 220 miles of sewer lines in 4325 acres; maintenance of an emergency treatment plant for use when intrusion of storm waters makes the flow too heavy for the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) plant.

- A. Stege District has a board of five directors, elected for staggered four-year terms; board members are compensated.
- B. Employees include a full-time secretary, five maintenance workers, part-time workers including the executive secretary, two office workers and three emergency plant maintenance workers.
- C. In early 1978 Stege District Directors were exploring the possibility of shifting Stege operations to another existing governmental body with the hope of cutting administrative costs. The outcome is unknown at the time of this printing.

IX. KENSINGTON FIRE DISTRICT

215 Arlington Avenue; phones: Emergency, 237-3231; all other calls, 526-7300. A board of three directors is elected and compensated. Board meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m., in the Fire and Police Building. They are open to the public.

- A. Formed in 1928, under Health and Safety Code 13-801, the Fire District's function is to provide fire protection, promote fire prevention, and provide emergency medical and rescue services to an area of approximately 1.2 square miles. Its insurance rating is 4. Kensington has mutual aid agreements with all Contra Costa County Fire Departments and a joint operational agreement with El Cerrito which permits both Kensington and El Cerrito to operate as one for training purposes and for fire response, although both have complete control of their own fiscal and personnel management. Since this agreement was made, each department has responded to an average of 25 fires per year in the other's territory.

- B. Emergency aid is given by firemen who are trained in emergency service and in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Firemen have inhalators, oxygen, salvage and rescue tools, and respond to emergencies such as flooding, accident calls, spilled gasoline, and downed wires.
- C. Paid force
 - 1. A Fire Chief, who is also District Administrator; an Assistant Chief; three captains; four engineers; four firefighters; part-time secretary.
 - 2. Since 1928, the Volunteer Firemen's Association, composed of 20 volunteers, has augmented the paid fire force. They are alerted whenever a fire is reported, and respond if available, as most have other jobs. Three volunteers are qualified as lieutenants on the job.
- D. Rolling equipment: 1973 International Van Pelt (pumping capacity 1250 gallons per minute); 1961 American-LaFrance Pumper (pumping capacity 1250 gallons per minute); 1973 Fire Chief's Dodge sedan; 1971 one-half ton utility pick-up truck; 1966 International Step van (rebuilt as a rescue van). The District has its own gas pump.

X. KENSINGTON COMMUNITY SERVICE DISTRICT (independent)
217 Arlington Avenue; phone 526-4141.

Formed in 1953 under State government code 60,100-61,749, to exercise police powers in Kensington. In 1955 residents voted to add park and recreation responsibilities to the district.

- A. Three directors, elected for staggered four year terms, are not compensated. Directors' meetings are on the third Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m. in the Fire and Police Building, and are open to taxpayers.
- B. Police have reciprocity agreements with Berkeley, El Cerrito, Albany, and East Bay Regional Park District. Kensington buys communication services from El Cerrito, so when all officers are on patrol, calls are taken from the El Cerrito switch board and radioed to patrol cars. The police case load in 1977 included 1973 "numbered cases" (crimes) and over 2000 miscellaneous public service cases.
- C. Recreational service is largely augmented by volunteer services. (See chart #2)
 - 1. Recreation Advisory Board, first appointed in 1956, advises and assists directors on park and recreation matters. This board varies in size and is not compensated.
 - 2. Kensington Community Council, Inc. is a non-profit, volunteer, independent corporation, formed to provide recreational, educational and informational

KENSINGTON RECREATION FUNDING & ADMINISTRATION

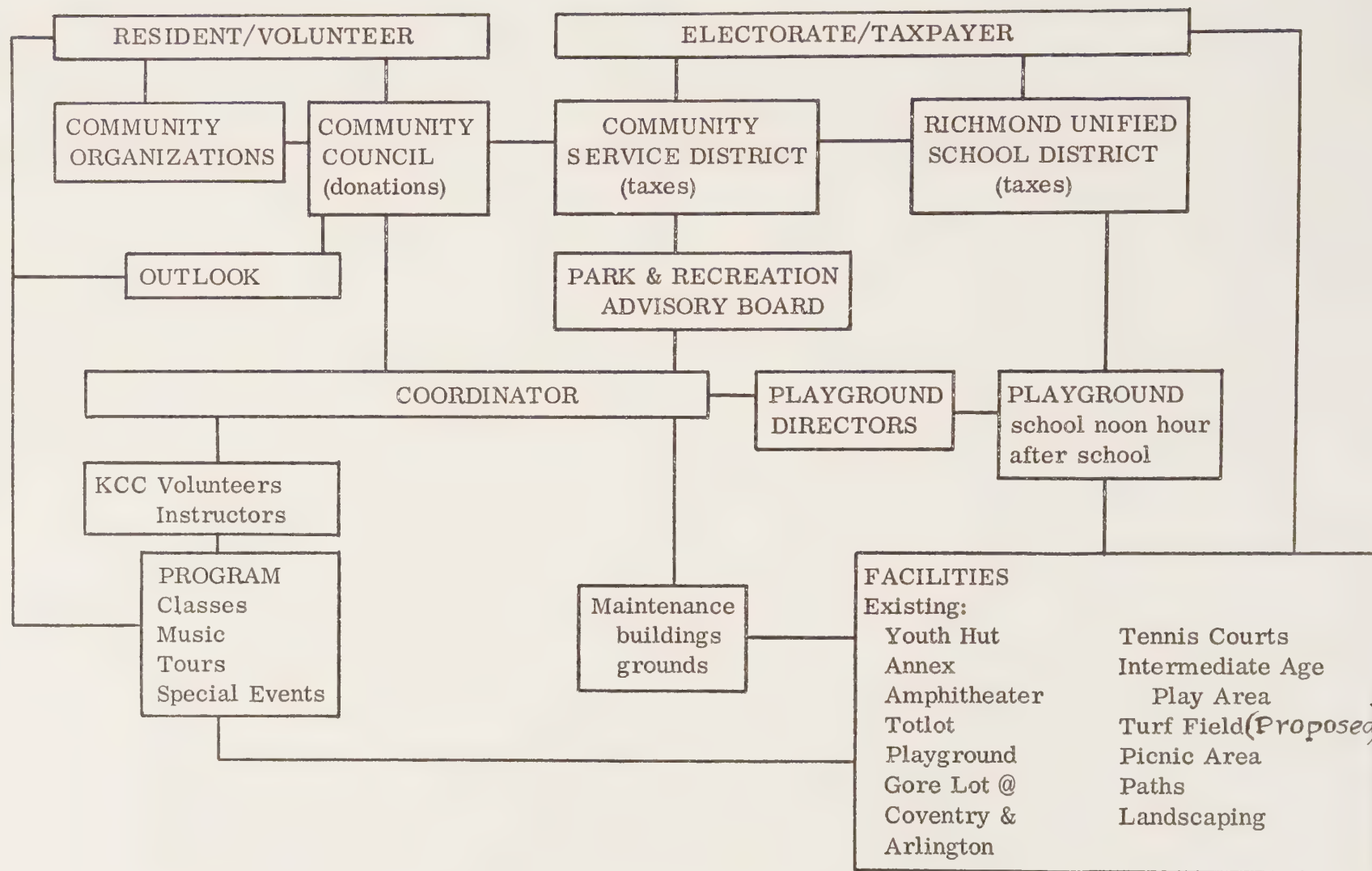


CHART 2

services to the community. Known as KCC, it cooperates with the Community Service District by administering the recreation program, providing book-keeping and office help, planning park development, contributing some funds for construction and maintenance of facilities and providing citizen input on recreational needs. KCC has no governmental powers and receives no tax support.

- D. Regarding property (parks), the Community Service District owns one "gore" lot at Arlington Avenue and Coventry Road, half of the parking lot in Kensington Park, and the Youth Hut, amphitheater and intermediate playground in Kensington Park. Land is leased for \$1 from the Richmond Unified School District on which the Community Service District has built two tennis courts, a picnic site, and a tot lot. A school bungalow known as the Youth Hut Annex is leased for recreation office space and indoor recreation.
- E. Paid personnel include: a Police Chief, who is also District Administrator; two sergeants; 10 patrolmen; a part-time Recreation Coordinator; a part-time secretary; custodian; gardeners. Richmond Unified School District gives compensation for an after-school playground leader.

XI. SERVICE AREA L-32 LIGHTING (independent regional district)

Street lighting is maintained by a county contract with Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Utility wires were undergrounded on Arlington Avenue in 1976 and new electroliers installed.

XII. EAST BAY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT (independent, regional)

Established in 1923, EBMUD provides 266 square miles in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties with water service and treats sewage from Berkeley, Oakland, and Stege Sanitary District. For information or service, call 841-0362, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays; for evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, call 835-3000.

XIII. ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT (independent, regional)

Bus service is provided along Arlington Avenue, Colusa Avenue, and a loop route from Grizzly Peak Boulevard to Trinity Avenue. The Arlington Avenue bus connects with El Cerrito bus No. 70 for transportation to El Cerrito Plaza, BART and Contra Costa College. Information on how to get from one location to another may be obtained from the Richmond office, 232-5665 or the Oakland office, 653-3535. For summer bus tours in the Bay Area, call 654-7878, ext. 314. Senior citizen reduced fare cards are obtainable at 508 16th Street, Oakland.

- XIV. BAY AREA RAPID TRANSIT (BART) (independent, regional)
Service from the El Cerrito Plaza or Berkeley stations, takes passengers between Richmond and Fremont, Concord and Daly City. For information, phone 465-2278. Senior Citizen reduced fares are obtainable from local banks. A green ticket worth \$6 is issued for 60 cents. Children, ages 5 to 12, and handicapped persons may obtain a \$6 ticket for \$1.50.
- XV. EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT (independent)
Recreational facilities are available to Kensington residents in Tilden Park, adjacent to our north-east border.
- XVI. BAY AREA POLLUTION CONTROL (independent, regional) Phone 771-6000.
- A. Established by California legislation in 1955 under section 2434-5 through 2437-4 of the Health and Safety Code of California. This district includes six counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara; four million people and two million automobiles.
- B. It is governed by a 12 member board consisting of two representatives from each county, named by their Board of Supervisors and a city selection committee of each county.
1. The Board of Directors appoints a 20 member Advisory Council, a Hearing Board, a Chief Administrator, and District Council.
- XVII. OTHER COUNTY INDEPENDENT DISTRICTS
- Mosquito Abatement District
- Flood Control District
- County Water Agency
- School Service Fund



Dedication of Kensington Library, 1965 — *Richmond Independent* photo



Kensington Library, 1978



PHYSICAL SETTING

KENSINGTON'S PHYSICAL SETTING

The use of land in Kensington is dictated primarily by the hilly terrain of this part of Contra Costa County. Starting at the southwest corner with an elevation of 120 feet, the land slope increases sharply to the ridge at the northeast sector where Squirrel Hill rises 886 feet above sea level. One of the distinguishing features of Kensington results from the steep contour of its land. From nearly every point in the community there is a dramatic and often breathtaking view of the San Francisco and San Pablo Bays and of the Golden Gate.

The steep slope of the land did not attract multiunit builders and developers to the area; therefore, the diversity of the homes in Kensington is one source of its character and charm.

The bulk of the land in Kensington is zoned R-6 for single family residences. The minimum lot size for the R-6 zone in the county is 6000 square feet. Building a structure on a parcel of less than this size may require a variance issued by the County Planning Department.

To a casual observer, the area would seem to be completely covered by residential structures. However, the 1977 County Assessor's books show bare lots that could produce approximately 113 single family houses. In the past three years 28 new homes have been built or started in Kensington.

Although the Kensington area is primarily residential, there are substantial commercial or municipal uses of land. The largest single commercial parcel (at the west end of the Kensington Fire District) is the Sunset View Cemetery and Mortuary which occupies 50.47 acres. The Filter Plant and Summit Reservoir of the East Bay Municipal Utility District occupy 33.11 acres of land within the district.

Our two shopping areas in Kensington on Arlington Avenue and at Colusa Circle are not very large, but they contain a variety of businesses ranging from gas stations and food markets to business offices and studios. Previous to 1972, we had no eating establishments. We now have two, a deli and a gourmet restaurant. We also now have a savings and loan association. We have, however, reached the limit of expansion in our shopping areas since all available retail business-zoned area is now occupied.

The shopping areas in Kensington are not as heavily used by the residents as they were twelve years ago, but even then the use was limited. We posed the following question twelve years ago and repeated it in 1977—"Approximately how much of your day-to-day shopping (such as groceries, gas, etc.) do you do in Kensington?" Here are the responses:

	1965	1977
Percentage of those who do less than 10% of their shopping in Kensington	43.0%	55.2%
Percentage of those who do between 10% and 30% of their shopping in Kensington	25.9%	29.0%
Percentage of those who do between 30% and 50% of their shopping in Kensington	12.1%	9.0%
Percentage of those who do more than 50% of their shopping in Kensington	19.0%	6.8%

Religious and educational groups comprise the other major land owners in Kensington. We have three churches, the largest of which is the Unitarian Church (5.94 acres). We also have the Carmelite Monastery (3.12 acres) located adjacent to the Blake Estate.

The Richmond Unified School District has title to 16.15 acres of land. The primary use of this land is for the Kensington Elementary School (kindergarten through sixth grade) and the County operated Jefferson School for the trainable mentally retarded. The School district has transferred title for two parcels of their land to the Kensington Community Service District for the Youth Hut and related recreational facilities, and to the Kensington Library District for the library which was completed in 1965.

Another large parcel of land used for educational purposes is the Blake Estate. This land (10.5 acres) was deeded to the Regents of the University of California by Mrs. Anita D. S. Blake who died in 1962 and Mr. Anson S. Blake who died in 1964. It was the Blake's desire that the estate be used for instruction and research by the Department of Landscape Architecture of the University of California, Berkeley. The Blake Garden is open to the public on week days only between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Horticulture groups who wish to tour the Blake Garden with a local guide should contact the Blake Garden staff. (Phone 524-2429).

The Kensington Community Service District owns a gore lot on Arlington Avenue which serves as a mini-park and helps preserve the limited open space available in the community.

There are no natural large bodies of water in Kensington. Cerrito Creek runs along part of the south boundary line. There is also a small creek running along the boundary between the Filtration Plant and the Cemetery.

The major geological feature of Kensington is the Hayward Fault which runs through the center of the area. The fault parallels Arlington Avenue from the southern boundary of Kensington and then turns to run approximately 400 feet west of Arlington Avenue from Westminster Avenue to the northwest boundary.



STREETS & TRAFFIC

KENSINGTON'S STREETS AND TRAFFIC

This section is concerned with street patterns, traffic circulation, development of roads, maintenance, administration and the happenings on these streets and roads.

The administration of streets and roads is vested in the Public Works Department of the County: The Director of the Department has his office in the County Administration Building in Martinez. The Department is responsible for construction and maintenance of county property. The Public Works Department provides engineering and maintenance services to the county highway network, administers certain special districts, services and maintains county vehicles, provides right-of-way services and coordinates building projects. It also has other functions not covered in the scope of this report.

Streets and roads are classified into three categories: (a) streets and roads dedicated and maintained by the county; (b) streets, roads, and thoroughfares dedicated but not maintained by the county; (c) non-dedicated and private streets and roads. All dedicated roads are not maintained by the county because the county will accept only those roads which are constructed to the standards of the subdivision ordinance, or those roads which by resolution of the Board of Supervisors have been determined to be vitally necessary to the county road network.

The major flow of vehicle traffic in Kensington is in a north-south direction in the morning and a reverse pattern in the evening. This situation corresponds with the going to and from work or school. The streets handling the major portion of this traffic are Arlington and Colusa Avenues. Both of these streets are also the Kensington routes for the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District's buses. For information regarding bus service look under XIII of the chapter titled "Government". Coventry Road and Sunset Drive-Eureka Avenue carry most of the east-west traffic flow.

The public transit system in Kensington is not as satisfactory to residents as many other amenities. In our questionnaire in the spring of 1977, we asked the following question: "Are you satisfied with the public transit system in Kensington?" We received 845 replies, of which only 66.9% said "Yes" and 33.1% said "No" or "Undecided".

Parking is a serious problem in many parts of Kensington. Deep gutters, narrow and crooked streets, and an excess of cars contribute to the parking problem. We asked these two questions in 1965 and again in 1977.

(a) "How many vehicles are parked at your address? (This includes all types of vehicles such as cars, trailers, boats, etc. that are parked regularly.)" (b) "How many off-street parking

spaces are available for regular use at your address? (Consider off-street spaces to include only those spaces within the boundaries of your property, such as your garage, driveway, carport)“.

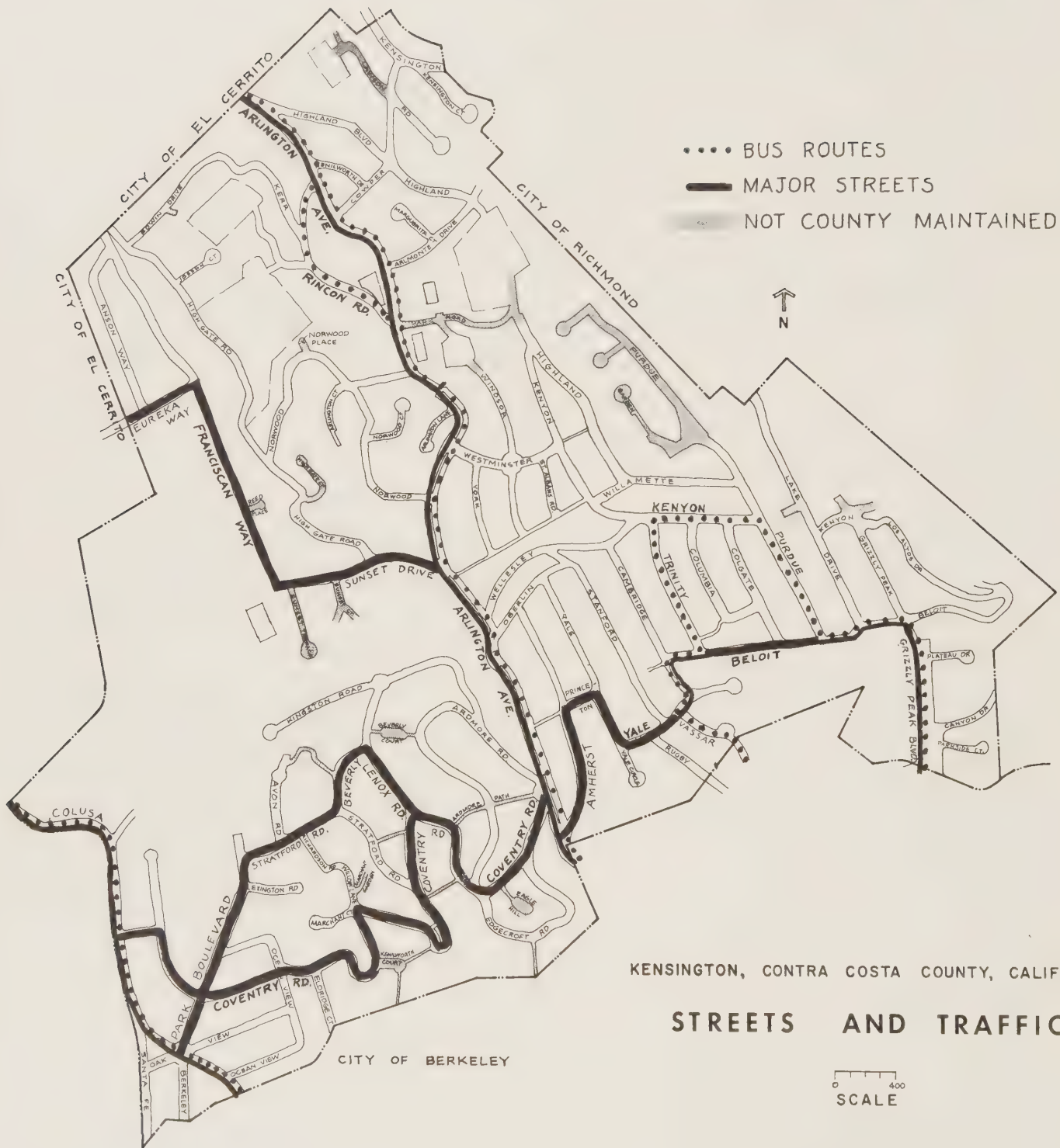
	1965	1977
Total response	486	826
(a) No vehicles	3.5%	4.6%
One vehicle	35.8%	34.2%
Two vehicles	52.3%	47.9%
Three vehicles	7.2%	11.1%
More than three vehicles	1.2%	2.2%
(b) Need more off-street parking space	16.2%	17.9%
Need less off-street parking space	46.5%	40.6%
Have the same number of vehicles as spaces .	37.3%	41.5%

The information on vehicles and spaces shows that in 1965, 83.8% of vehicles owned did not need to be parked on the street. In 1977 the percentage was 82.1%. But when less than 20% of needed space is required out on the street, and less than 14% of car owners have more than three vehicles, why are our streets so crowded with vehicles!

One of our questions to the public in 1977 was: “Are you satisfied with traffic safety in Kensington?” Of the 836 replies we received, 632 (75.6%) stated “Yes”; 154 (18.4%) stated “No”; 50 (6.0%) stated “Undecided”. Those who expressed their dissatisfaction over traffic safety were concerned that our allowed speed limits were higher than they should be.

The poor condition of Kensington’s streets have been its trademark for many years. On the 1977 questionnaire concerning improvements needed in Kensington, an overwhelming majority of responders stated that road maintenance and repair were urgently needed in their areas. Through continued persuasion by the Kensington Improvement Club as well as the A.C. Transit Company and individual residents, the County Public Works Department several years ago began to budget funds for an on-going road improvement program in Kensington. To date Arlington Avenue, Rincon Road, Kenyon, Beloit, and Amherst have been resurfaced. Beverly is scheduled for 1978. It is the fervent hope of all residents that this program will continue.

In 1975 the Kensington Improvement Club initiated a program to underground all power and telephone lines on both sides of Arlington Avenue throughout the length of Kensington, to re-surface the street and to install new electroliers. The work was accomplished through the cooperation of the County, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, and the Pacific Telephone Company. It was finished in 1976. The result has been a delightful “new look” along Kensington’s main street.





HOUSING

KENSINGTON'S HOUSING

The section on Kensington's Population and Housing in the 1966 edition of "A Survey of Kensington" began with the following sentence:

"The 1960 Census reports 2083 housing units of which 85% are owner occupied, 97% are single family and 99+% are sound."

Now in 1978, as we update "A Survey of Kensington," we see some changes. The Contra Costa County Planning Department did a special census in 1975 for the entire county. This census reported 2127 housing units in Kensington including 86.2% owner occupied units, 93.0% single family units and 97.1% units which were sound. So in the fifteen years from 1960 to 1975, Kensington has obtained 44 more housing units, has a 1.2% increase in owner occupancy, has increased by 4.0% the reported multiple family housing units and has increased by 1.9% the unsound houses.

The 1975 census reports that Kensington has 142 multiple units. It is surprising that there are this many since, for many years, Kensington has had only single family zoning in residential areas, and the retail business sections which do permit multiple units are very small and contain very few multiple units. Under the R-6 zoning now covering all of Kensington's residential area, a permit may be obtained to add an attached or detached housing unit to an established structure for the use of "servants or members of the family within the third degree of consanguinity." This ruling has encouraged some people to file for a conversion of their single home to a duplex under the county rulings, but then turn it into the kind of multiple unit that is illegal. Any apparently illegal conversion should be reported to the Zoning Administrator of the County Planning Department. It is also a zoning violation for more than five unrelated persons to share a single family house. The County Planning Department can be called for advice on such zoning violations.

As stated in the 1975 census, 97.1% of Kensington housing units are sound, 2.5% deteriorated and 0.3% delapidated. Approximately 40% of Kensington houses were built prior to 1939, so we can expect the years ahead to show either an increase in deterioration or an increase in repairs. The monthly records of the County Building Department, however, indicate that repairs are presently being made as needed.

According to the 1975 census report, we have 2090 occupied units with an average of 2.52 persons per unit. The U.S. Census of 1960 reported 3.0 persons per occupied unit, so we are thinning out a bit.

In the 1977 questionnaire on which this present "Survey of Kensington" is based, one of the questions was: "Is a view of the Bay an important feature of your home?" Another question was: "Would you favor a regulation that would gradually restrict tree height in areas where views are obstructed?" Of the 816 replies to these questions, 489 answered "yes" to both ; and 137 responses reported no view of the Bay but favored a restriction on tree height. Only 190 persons reported that they were not in favor of a regulation that would restrict tree height, and of the 190, only 86 had an important view of the Bay. Since 77% of all people in Kensington who responded to the question about a restriction on tree height are in favor of a regulation, it may well be possible for Kensington to persuade the County Planning Department to establish such a regulation. However, we would need to know the attitude of the 1311 residents who did not respond to the questionnaire. The same questions asked in the questionnaire of 1965 produced responses which, though smaller in total, were almost the same in percentages. Control of tree height was supported by 77%.

In 1965 one of the questions asked was: "What would be the maximum amount you would be willing to pay to eliminate overhead power poles and wires?" Of the 432 responses received, 234 (54.2%) were willing to pay as much as \$400 to have the overhead power poles and wires eliminated, and 198 (45.8%) were unwilling to pay anything. This question was not asked in the 1977 questionnaire, but in answer to a question regarding improvements needed in Kensington, many residents gave high priority to undergrounding utilities throughout the community. As one drives along Arlington Avenue where recently all the wires were placed underground, the attractiveness is very obvious. Think how beautiful Kensington would be if all our overhead wires and poles were eliminated! It would probably cost each property owner between \$500 and \$1000, but now that our houses are considered to be worth at least twice what they were in 1965, the percentage cost per house value of burying the wires would be no greater than in 1965.

One final comment about Kensington homes. According to the 1960 census, the average value of the Kensington house was \$23,300. According to the County Tax Assessor's office, the average value of the Kensington house in 1977 was \$62,467.



Kensington Community Council Open House



At the Youth Hut

RESIDENTS



KENSINGTON'S RESIDENTS

When the Kensington Improvement Club published its first "Survey of Kensington", it made this comment about Kensington residents:

"There is no such thing as an average Kensingtonian, but the characteristics represented by the mean, median, or the majority of the residents are the following. A Kensingtonian is a white male or female 37.3 years. He (or she) is married, lives in a single family home, has completed fifteen years of schooling, works at a profession or technical occupation or is a manager or proprietor, earns \$10,570 per year, drives an automobile to work, and has lived in the same house for ten years."

Now, in 1977, some statistics have changed. Our average age is 39.7, we have completed sixteen years of schooling, we earn \$19,792 per household, but we have still lived in the same house for ten years. The other comments remain today as they were in 1966.

The Contra Costa County Planning Department did a special census in 1975 for the entire county. This has provided more recent and interesting information regarding Kensington's population. Most of the remaining portion of this report on Kensington's Residents will be taken from this census.

How many of us now live in Kensington? The 1975 census gives a total of 5294, including 2568 (48.5%) males and 2726 (51.5%) females. For the county as a whole, the male percentage runs a little higher with 49.3% and the female lower with 50.7%. Within age ranges we have 21.2% of the residents at the age of 60 or older and 6% between the ages of birth and six years. Kensington does have some residents of different racial background, but in 1975 we were 92.5% white. The 1960 U.S. Census reported a population of 6161 and 98.8% white.

The 1975 census also had some interesting information regarding the employment status in Kensington.

Of the 2563 males reported:

- 1354 were employed full time
- 84 were employed part time
- 37 were unemployed but seeking employment
- 213 were adult students (16 years or older)
- 875 were not in the labor force

Of the 2721 females reported:

- 717 were employed full time
- 238 were employed part time
- 27 were unemployed but seeking employment
- 185 were adult students (16 years or older)
- 1554 were not in the labor force

Totaling these figures, we have the following:

- 2393 (45.3%) employed full time or part time
- 2429 (46.0%) not in the labor force
- 64 (1.2%) unemployed but seeking employment
- 398 (7.5%) adult students

The places where Kensington residents work are about where one would expect. The 1975 census shows the following places of employment for the heads of households and the second wage earners:

Kensington	110
East county	10
Central county	63
West county	253
Alameda county	1110
San Francisco	325
Other areas	76
	<hr/>
	1947

The total of 1947 persons is 446 less than the 2393 listed above as employed full or part time because the higher figure includes more than two wage earners and the lower figure only the head of the household and a second wage earner. From the above listings of working places you can see that only 5.6% of the listed workers work in Kensington and more than half (57.0%) probably work in Berkeley and Oakland. Also, whereas only 16.7% work in Contra Costa County (excluding Kensington), 16.7% work in San Francisco.

Another piece of information produced by the 1975 census concerned the educational level of the head of household in Kensington. Of the 1673 persons listed, only eight had never attended school, 149 (8.9%) were high school graduates only, 415 had completed four years of college, and 798 had completed more than four years of college. Thus we observe that of the 1673 total, 1213 (72.5%) Kensingtonians have completed a minimum of four years of college education.

The income figures reported for the year 1974 are probably somewhat lower than today's income because of inflation in the past three years. However, reports of 2090 Kensington households in 1974 show 22.7% of the families with an income under \$12,000 - a figure lower than 28 of the 38 unincorporated areas. The median household income for Kensington was \$19,792. Kensington is not on top in this category but is higher than all cities except Lafayette and Moraga, and is higher than 31 of the 38 unincorporated communities.

One final bit of residential information that you may find interesting has to do with answers to several of the questions we asked in our 1977 questionnaire. (1) "How long have you lived in Kensington?" We received replies that reported the status of 862 persons. Sixty-eight reported they had lived in Kensington less than two years, 268 had lived here between 2-10 years, 426 between 11-30 years, 91 between 31-40 years and 9 people have lived here over 40 years including three who have been here over 50 years. If we assume that the response of the 862 persons is representative of all the adults in Kensington, we can say that 61.0% of Kensington adults have lived here longer than ten years.

(2) "How long have you lived in the Bay Area?" From evaluation of the 864 replies we received, it is apparent that many people who have moved to Kensington came from somewhere in the Bay Area. Only 11.2% stated they had lived in the Bay Area less than 11 years, while 46.8% stated they had lived in the Bay Area longer than thirty years.

(3) "If not native to this area, what part of the country or the world are the family members from?" The answers to this question were somewhat confusing since of the 1215 persons reported on we could not tell how many were adults and how many children; however, 439 persons stated they were native of Kensington or other places in California. The largest group were the 532 who were native of the U.S. east of the Rockies. Our residents also include 109 natives of Europe and 59 who came from other parts of the world. This is interesting, however, since we can assume that 13.8% of all Kensingtonians were born outside of the United States.

(4) "How well do you like Kensington as a place to live?" From the following 850 responses we assume that 98% of all people in Kensington like Kensington:

(a) Like very much	692
(b) Like	142
(c) Neutral	15
(d) Dislike	1
(e) Dislike very much	0

Why do people like Kensington? Most agreed on the following qualities: The small town atmosphere; community spirit and volunteer-oriented activities; the quiet peacefulness of a

friendly stable community; the convenience of its location; our unincorporated independence and lack of “politics”; the view, our trees, gardens and woodsy setting; the variety of architecture; the proximity to Tilden Park and nature areas; recreation and cultural advantages; and the security of having our own police and fire departments. Above all, residents appreciate their congenial, interesting and concerned fellow residents but value their own privacy.

However contented our residents feel in living in Kensington, they were very vocal in responding to questions concerning conditions which they felt might be improved. The deplorable condition of most of our streets was awarded highest priority, along with bitter complaints about rising property taxes. Others felt that traffic safety would be improved by limiting the number of parked cars on narrow streets, trimming shrubbery at blind intersections, reducing speed of cars by more stop and yield signs, and better traffic control around the Arlington Avenue shopping center during rush hours. There were many requests for direct bus service to BART and the El Cerrito Plaza, and recommendations for the use of smaller shuttle-type buses.

Abuse of zoning ordinances and the illegal conversion of single unit dwellings into multiple units bothered many residents. Others were concerned with the lack of an ordinance limiting tree height and the consequent inconsiderate blocking of their view by neighboring tall trees. There was a strong feeling that some means of better communication with our District Supervisor and county administration must be found. More service for the tax dollar was a frequent request, since it was felt that county benefits are not commensurate with taxes paid.

Other improvements requested were cleaning of gutters, less littering, better control of animals by owners, more services for our senior citizens, more attention to the needs of the western portion of Kensington and the improvement of the Colusa Circle area.

On the other hand, there were several responses pointing out that it is because of the minimal change over the past in Kensington, that it has survived as the unique community it is today, and that more “improvements” might improve it right out of its natural charm.



Kensington Park sign erected 1975

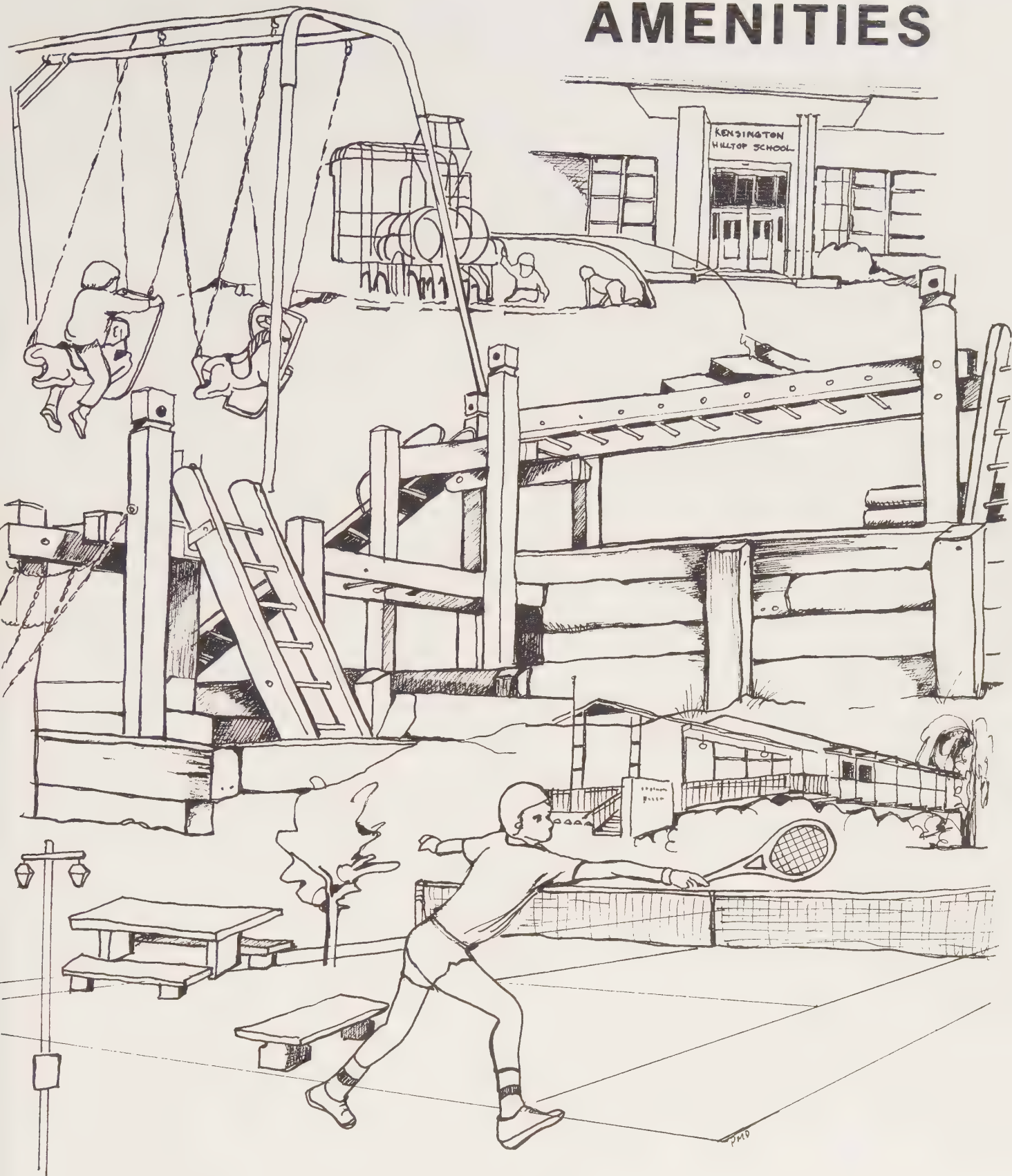


Tot Lot dedicated 1972



Amphitheater

AMENITIES



KENSINGTON'S AMENITIES

The dictionary defines an amenity as “something that adds to material comfort or convenience or to smoothness of social interaction.” Since Kensington is an unincorporated area, it has no municipal government to provide such amenities. Instead, the community must deal with a diverse group of separate county and district agencies which do not always work closely with each other. Moreover, Martinez and the County Board of Supervisors are many long miles away, and Kensington requests seldom hold priority. Consequently, residents discovered very early that if social, educational and recreational programs and facilities, community improvements, and adequate police and fire protection were to be available, they would have to be of the “home-grown” variety, on a do-it-yourself basis. Thus, most of the amenities Kensington offers have come about through the efforts of community residents working individually and through volunteer organizations, and generously donating their time, skills and money to create the kind of community they want for themselves and their children.

One of the first volunteer groups was the Kensington Improvement Club, organized in 1921 to “promote and foster the general welfare of the community and to cooperate with the proper officials to attain needed improvements.” It has been an active club ever since, serving the interests of the community in civic matters and effecting major changes where needed. The Club operates in a “town-meeting” fashion and provides a forum for public discussion and expression of opinion. Though it does not exert the power of a governmental body, through the years it has been effective in supplying a community voice and communications channel with the county government.

The new look on Arlington Avenue with its distinctive electroliers bathing Kensington’s main street in a rosy glow, the undergrounding of Arlington utility lines and the re-surfacing of the street have all been recent projects initiated by the Improvement Club. The redwood signboard at the south entrance to Kensington, which has replaced the unsightly placards previously tacked to telephone poles, is another Improvement Club project financed in cooperation with seven other community organizations.

In 1972 another civic improvement organization was formed, the Kensington Property Owners Association (KPOA). Its purpose is to inquire into matters which might affect owners of real property in the community and to disseminate pertinent information for their benefit. It also notifies neighborhood residents of pending variance applications. Recently it initiated the Home Alert program in which citizens cooperate with the police department by reporting suspicious incidences and by taking protective measures in their homes to prevent crime. The program has been effective in providing a more than 50% reduction in burglaries.

The need for social and recreation programs in Kensington was recognized as early as 1932. The first community action was taken at Fellowship House, 264 Arlington Avenue, the first building to be erected in Kensington and originally a subdivision office for the North End Land Company. Here the Arlington Community Church provided a place for community groups to meet, and the enthusiastic spirit of volunteerism, basic to the future of Kensington's social and recreation activities, was born.

Kensington continued to develop rapidly during the 1940's, and although limited recreation programs were available to the community in neighboring cities, families increasingly sought more local facilities and activities geared to the growing number of young children who had little place to play except in the narrow streets. In 1948, the new Arlington Church was built at 52 Arlington Avenue. Facilities in the building were made available to Kensington organizations, thus providing for a wider range of community activities, and a Community Center Council (CCC), composed of representatives from the groups using the church building, was established.

In 1949, the first long-range recreation plans for Kensington were drawn up, and in 1952 the first summer recreation program was offered by the CCC under the direction of Mrs. Wm. Stiles. It was an immediate success and rapidly grew in scope to a point where more sophisticated planning and facilities became a necessity. The Richmond Elementary District School Board agreed to a request to reserve school property, not required for school use, for future Kensington recreation facilities. Plans were considered for using a portion of the available property for the construction of a Youth Hut which would withstand the exuberance of youth, contain storage space for their supplies and a kitchen to serve their voracious appetites. In spite of all the districts, county departments and agencies that control the affairs of our little unincorporated corner of Contra Costa County, there was no meaningful governmental agency to which the community could turn for assistance in either the planning or financing of such a project. So again, if the Youth Hut were to become a reality, it would have to be a do-it-yourself project. Under the direction of a committee headed by Mrs. Robley Berry, the cost of the building was raised through contributions of money, labor, time and material. Organized groups held fund raisers, donating the proceeds to the cause, and professionals donated their services. Committee members made sandwiches and served hot coffee to the week-end work crews. In 1955, under the professional expertise of contractor Arnold Lahti, the Hut was completed at the unbelievably low cost of \$20,824.75.

It now became evident that there was need for a legal body to assume responsibility for the administration and maintenance of the Youth Hut and to coordinate the many volunteer groups involved in providing recreational activities. By a vote of the electorate, the duties of the

Kensington Community Service District (KCSD) were expanded to include Park and Recreation administration. The District appointed a Recreation Advisory Board (RAB) to advise and assist the Directors in the development of recreation and to assist in the maintenance of recreation facilities.

In 1960, the CCC was replaced by the present Kensington Community Council (KCC), an autonomous, non-profit corporation composed of representatives from all non-political organizations in Kensington. It was formed to provide recreational and educational services for the community and operates in cooperation with the KCSD, the RAB and the Richmond Unified School District. KCC is funded by community contributions solicited through an annual fund drive, class fees and Outlook advertising. A recreation office and two recreation rooms, located in a school district bungalow called the "Annex", augment the facilities in the Youth Hut. A paid recreation coordinator schedules and supervises the recreation program, assisted by volunteers and an after-school playground director.

A year round recreation program geared to community interests and featuring classes for all age levels is currently offered. Instruction is available in a wide variety of arts, crafts and music as well as in educational fields.

The KCC also sponsors activities such as bus tours, nature walks, pumpkin carving contests, teen-age dances, a Christmas tree decorating party, a Christmas sing, a summer day camp for children and a yearly open house where one can see Kensington in action. This is a get-acquainted-with-your-neighbor affair offering a view of KCC's recreation program, park facilities, activities of other Kensington organizations and hobbies. It usually culminates with a supper of barbecued hamburgers for everyone. Once a year, a flea market is held at the Youth Hut where residents can buy, sell and exchange new and used articles.

The recent construction of tennis courts in Kensington Park has given rise to the formation of the Kensington Tennis Club, an active organization that sponsors competitive matches for Kensington residents as well as fund-raising tournaments.

In 1963, a long range master plan for expansion of recreation facilities and park development was drawn up by members of the KCC Board of Directors and approved by the KCSD and the RUSD Board. Since that time it has gradually been implemented as funds became available. A parking lot was constructed by the KCSD and the Arlington Church. A barbecue pit was built with donated plans and materials, and in 1966, an amphitheatre was constructed behind the Youth Hut. A tot-lot has been created with volunteer labor, and an intermediate age playground has been added above the Youth Hut. Recently, two tennis courts and a picnic area have been constructed across from the Annex. Kensington Park, once a dream on paper, is becoming a reality, and the recreation department has grown from a small seed to full flower.

KENSINGTON PARK MASTER PLAN



Map 4

In the May, 1977 questionnaire mailed to all residents, the following question was asked: "What activities or creative outlets would you like to see provided in the community?" The majority of responses indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the current program. Among suggestions for future consideration, a community swimming pool held high priority on many returns. Other suggestions were for more night classes for working adults, a hand ball court, a turf field, a physical fitness course, hiking and biking clubs, walking tours, choral groups and chamber music concerts, lectures by talented residents, and more teen-age and family oriented activities.

One of the first volunteer services to the community was the publication of a monthly bulletin in 1944 by the pastor of the Arlington Community Church, to provide an "Outlook" on the progress and needs of the community. Over the years, its publication has increased in scope and has provided information which has done much toward welding community consciousness. In 1961, its publication became the responsibility of the KCC. It is published once a month during the school year and mailed without charge to all homes in Kensington, informing them of current recreation classes, special events, church, youth group and organizational activities, and community concerns.

The Kensington Branch of the Contra Costa County Library System was but a small lending stall in the old "Fellowship House" in the early 1940's. In 1948, it moved to the lower floor of the Arlington Community Church building. By the 1960's, these quarters had become so cramped further expansion was imperative. In 1965, a Library Service District was formed, and the taxes raised were used to build our present 5,000 square foot modern building at 61 Arlington Ave. The library's permanent collection includes 33,013 books, 110 periodicals, 297 records, 150 cassettes, and 36 films. There are also numerous reference materials, and any book in the Contra Costa County, Alameda County or the State Library systems can be requested for a patron by the branch library. The library also lends its 8mm sound-movie projector and has a 16mm audio-visual projector which may be borrowed by groups only.

The Friends of the Library is an active organization which uses membership funds and proceeds from an annual used book sale to purchase supplementary books, periodicals and equipment for library use. They also sponsor special events such as lecture series, movies, exhibits, poetry and photo contests.

There are many social clubs in Kensington which contribute to the amenities offered the community. The largest of these is the Arlington Women's Club, founded in 1934, which holds monthly meetings as well as offering a variety of special interest sections in such areas as fine arts, bridge, world affairs, arm-chair travel, sports and needlecraft. The Club meets in the Arlington Community Church, and membership is limited to 300.

One of the newest of the social organizations is the Kensington Senior Citizens (does this say something about us?). They meet in the Arlington Church social hall every Thursday and offer lunch, plus a variety of programs including crafts, community singing, lectures, films, bus tours and discussion groups for those over 55.

Religious amenities are found in the three churches located in Kensington - the Arlington Community Church, the Unitarian Church, and the Berkeley Park Chapel. In addition to their religious services and Sunday schools, the churches also offer a variety of educational seminars, lectures, bazaars, social gatherings, and musical and drama events. The Arlington Church and the Unitarian Church both have exceptionally fine organs, stages, movie screens and religious libraries. Both churches offer catering service by church women for receptions held in the church.

There are two public schools located in Kensington—the Kensington Elementary School and the Jefferson School, a county school for the trainable mentally retarded. There are also two cooperative nursery schools as well as private nursery schools, a Montessori school, a school for grades 1-6 located at the Unitarian Church and a child care center at the Arlington Community Church. The Kensington School PTA is an active group which had its inception in 1925 when it boasted 16 members. During the ensuing years, it has contributed many fine amenities for the Kensington school children which would not otherwise have been available. PTA members staff the school library, bring enrichment materials and activities into the classroom, provide remedial reading services to students through the RISE program, and, for many years, they sponsored the school chorus. In the fall, the PTA sponsors a ski and cycle exchange. It also publishes the Ken-Vue, a monthly bulletin of school news and events.

The Dad's Club is also an active group holding a Dad-and-Sons night and a Dad and Daughters night as well as co-sponsoring with the PTA a rip-roaring spring carnival, the proceeds from which benefit student and school programs.

The Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Brownies, Girl Scouts, Blue Birds and Camp Fire Girls are all represented by Kensington troops and are largely sponsored by Kensington organizations. These young people have provided many valuable services to the community while earning service merit badges.

Political groups are represented by the Kensington Republican Women's Club which holds monthly meetings with speakers on timely subjects, and the Kensington Democratic Club.

Kensington is indeed a unique community and the amenities it provides are the direct results of the courage, inspiration and dedication of its residents. There are few, if any, other communities which offer such a variety of amenities for so few tax-payer dollars.

KENSINGTON ORGANIZATIONS

- I. CIVIC GROUPS
 - Kensington Improvement Club
 - Kensington Property Owners' Association
 - Kensington Community Council
 - Recreation Advisory Board
 - Friends of the Kensington Library
 - Volunteer Firemen's Association
- II. SCHOOL GROUPS
 - Kensington PTA
 - Kensington Dad's Club
- III. YOUTH GROUPS
 - Cub Scouts - Boy Scouts
 - Brownies - Girl Scouts
 - Blue Birds - Camp Fire Girls
 - Indian Guides
- IV. RECREATION GROUPS
 - Kensington Community Council
 - Kensington Tennis Club
- V. CHURCHES
 - Arlington Community Church
 - Unitarian Church of Berkeley
 - Berkeley Park Chapel
- VI. SCHOOLS - (Public and non-profit)
 - Kensington Elementary School
 - Jefferson School for the Trainable Mentally Retarded
 - Kensington Nursery School (located at Arlington Community Church)
 - Skytown Nursery School (located at Unitarian Church)
 - Windrush School (grades 1-6; located at Unitarian Church)
 - Arlington Church Child Care (located at Arlington Church)
 - Kensington Montessori School (located at Arlington Church)
- VII. ELECTED
 - Kensington Community Service District (Police and Recreation)
 - Kensington Fire District
- VIII. POLITICAL GROUPS
 - Republican Women's Club
 - Kensington Democrats
- IX. SOCIAL GROUPS
 - Arlington Women's Club
 - Senior Citizens

DISTINCTIVE QUALITY



KENSINGTON'S DISTINCTIVE QUALITY

Unincorporated, independent in thought and mode of living, and for the most part satisfied with itself, Kensington is a hilly community in Contra Costa County. It is bordered by Tilden Park, Berkeley, Richmond, Albany and El Cerrito. No ticky-tacky here, our varied residents are an interesting and enigmatic lot. Cosmopolitan to the core, we are still pioneer in spirit and enjoy our village atmosphere no matter what the cost. Our very narrow, crooked, tree-lined streets are our trademark and are at once our asset and our liability. We curse the bumpy streets, tar upon tar, patch upon patch, with deep gutters suitable only for the Model T; but we rise in a rage en masse whenever a through road is suggested. Most of our streets are so dangerous, we have to be careful in using them. The old-timer becomes inured to the sharp up-hill, down-hill turns, the swinging in and around the cars. But for the newcomer it is a harrowing first-time experience. However, in time he or she, with great nonchalance, will also whip the curves and dodge the cars. Our on-street parking problems defy description.

Although generally alike economically and educationally, we have residents from many nations, races and religions. Politics are vital and our poll turn out is consistently high. Having no municipal government, we have only Martinez toward which to direct our energies, and we have never been known for our reticence when a problem arises.

In many ways we reflect much of the University atmosphere in our way of life. Many of us work at the University of California or other Bay Area schools, and some of our temporary neighbors are visiting members of foreign universities giving us a unique chance to meet people from all over the world. Also, as a bedroom community for the Bay Area, our interests tend to be widespread and encompass many metropolitan problems not generally associated with our own community. It is a challenging place to live for young and old alike. Nobel Prize winners, professors, lawyers, artists, engineers, doctors and business men are our neighbors.

A ruralistic, generally tranquil setting we cliff dwellers wind home to, seeing magnificent trees and gardens and an unparalleled view of the Bay. This treasured view is marred more than occasionally by outrageous utility pole giants with octopus wires and Gorgonian features mocking the sunset behind the Golden Gate. Our location in the Bay Area is enviable. We can go to San Francisco, Sausalito, Tilden Park, Muir Woods or Hertz Hall with ease and come home to our individual and different homes instead of horizontal or vertical boxes. Our climate is moderate and variable (that is to say, some mornings there is no fog). Any grumbling about the weather is usually quelled by a visit East or South, or "over the hills." Sometimes on a foggy, foggy day we forget how lucky we are.

There is much here which smacks of the small town. We have an excellent fire department supplemented by a volunteer organization with zeal second to none. Our courteous and helpful policemen know us and our children and are a great comfort to us all. Our volunteer efforts are broad and effective. We like to "do it ourselves." The PTA, Kensington Community Council, Friends of the Kensington Library, Scouts, Camp Fire and church groups are served by volunteers who, more often than not, are extremely busy people who still have time year in and year out for community needs. The Outlook keeps us informed of the many amenities in our own community, acquaints us with our neighbors, and brings into focus our diffuse natures.

We have three churches, an excellent elementary school, our own Youth Hut, amphitheater, playgrounds, tennis courts, organized recreational activities and a lovely library. The active Senior Citizen Center attests to a community growing older. On the other hand, the Tot-lot is bursting with the joyful cries of the young. And in keeping with the spirit of the 70's we have our own community Flea Market.

How we love our trees, if they are not too tall and in front of our own particular view. Many of our residents are retired and have lived here most of their lives, giving us a sense of heritage. Many of us ask nothing more than to be left alone. Privacy is possible and highly respected. We need changes, most certainly, but most of us hope that a more efficient governing system will not do away with our feeling of being Kensington residents. Most of us feel very fortunate indeed to live right here as evidenced in the following comments made by Kensington residents when asked to state their image of Kensington on a recent questionnaire

"A haven in the hills."

"A charming hilltop legacy."

"A fine blend of urban - rural living."

"Small town caring in a cosmopolitan urban area."

"A great place to live and raise a family."

"An intimate garden community."

"A happy medium in a sea of agitated life styles."

"A quiet treasure."

"A crown jewel setting in the Berkeley hills."

"Love it—a happy place to live."

SUMMARY

This Survey has attempted to present an historical perspective of the Kensington area and to provide information on which its future may depend. We do not claim to be definitive in all our conclusions; our earnest desire has been to be as impartial and factual as is humanly possible. We apologize for any and all errors which may appear in the Survey and request that any corrections be brought to our attention.

The editors of this study are certain that residents of the community will feel a glow of pride after reading the Survey. However, the editors humbly point out that a sense of pride is only a starting point for future significant accomplishment. The preparation of the Survey once again impressed upon us the fact that an enormous reservoir of talent exists in our community. May we all have the wisdom and energy to use this talent to good purpose.

The Directors of the Kensington Improvement Club hope this Survey will be both enjoyable and informative to all who read it. We further hope it will stimulate some hard thinking about the problems confronting Kensington and encourage citizen participation in community groups working toward their resolution.

The Improvement Club welcomes all suggestions and program proposals at its board and membership meetings. Alternatively, call on one of your neighbors who is serving as a Director of the Club (see page 2) and have him or her submit your ideas for discussion and action.

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C124906180

